

Affair of the Heart



My love affair with the mountains began over 25 years ago when I went to UCD and joined the Mountaineering Club. Most Sundays I was to be found hiking in the Wicklow hills. Weekend trips extended my horizons to other parts of Ireland and abroad: the Maam Turks in the spring, overnight Lug walks in the moonlight with frost underfoot, winter trips to Scotland and summer trekking in the Alps.

Like all love affairs mine started out intensely, but like the best ones it developed into a steady relationship founded on mutual respect. I have always had difficulty applying the word conquest to mountaineering, thinking instead that our approach should be in harmony with the mountains. We need to co-exist with the fragile ecosystem and also with the people who live there. I can recall when the walk from Table Track to Lugnaquilla was a tricky piece of navigation. Now it is easy to follow the erosion (and even the eroders on weekends).

Mountaineering allows us to visit places - both in the world and in our heads. The changes in the mountainscape require a matching change in our attitudes. Small is beautiful. Why intrude on the mountains en masse when a more intimate approach can be so much more rewarding? We should depart discreetly and leave no trace of our passing.

When I joined UCDCM I didn't realise that I had also joined the MCI. It was only

when I served on the club committee that I became aware of the national body. I began to attend council meetings and realised the amount of work that was being done on my behalf. The MCI is a largely voluntary organisation run by an elected board assisted by committees and working closely with the staff in our small office. Like any voluntary organisation it needs all the help it can get. As our lives become more pressurised and we have to run ever faster to stand still, we have less time to give. I never cease to be impressed by the amount of work done by the volunteers within the MCI to whom great thanks is due.

Last year I walked in the Nephin Bogs for the first time. As I walked it occurred to me that there shouldn't be any mountains in Ireland that I haven't visited by now. Thoroughly exploring our treasure trove of mountains is rewarding in itself but it also helps to spread the load on the hills. Even in our regular haunts we can help by trying out different routes. A relationship needs a varied approach to keep interest alive. It requires give and take. We take a lot from the mountain environment and we must learn to give something back, whether it is through working with Mountain Meitheal, contributing to the local economy or passing on the flame in our clubs. We are the users of a precious resource and our behaviour bequeaths a legacy to future generations of walkers and climbers.

Declan O'Keefe

President
Mountaineering Council of Ireland

2008 EVENTS

MCI Regional Area Meetings 2008

Further information will be on the website and in the December edition of Mountaineering Matters.

15th January, Mayo

17th January, Dublin

22nd January, Cork

24th January, Belfast

Eric Jones Lecture

Eric has participated in extreme sports worldwide for over 45 years, his motto is -- Life is adventure or nothing at all. His passion has been free solo climbing with many ascents in Britain and the Alps.

15th January, Queens University Belfast

16th January, Dublin Park Inn, Smithfield Village

17th January, University College Cork

Entry: €7 MCI Members/Students/Unwaged or €10 non-members

MCI Alpine Meet 2008 information evening

Thursday 24th January '08

7pm, Sport HQ Park West Business Park, Dublin

Meet Mick Tighe (head guide)

- Slide show and talk
- Question and answer session
- Equipment and travel advice

All welcome (€7 charge for non MCI members)

Booking required - Contact training@mountaineering.ie

MCI Annual General Meeting 2008

9 February 2008

Venue Glendalough Hotel, Co Wicklow

As members, this is your opportunity to air your opinions and hear about the work of the MCI. The 2008 Annual General Meeting takes place in the afternoon to allow members from outside the Dublin / Wicklow area to travel home afterwards.

Any motions for discussion at the AGM must be received by the Honorary Secretary on or before **Friday 11 January 2008**.

MCI Youth Competition

Categories are age 9 to 12 yrs, 13 to 15 yrs and 16 to 18 yrs split into boys and girls categories. Parental consent form obligatory (download it from www.mountaineering.ie or complete it on the day)

Registration is at 10-10.30am.

For further information contact angela@mountaineering.ie

Youth Competition dates are:

Ozone wall, Belfast **Saturday 19th Jan**

Final is Saturday 9th Feb Gortatole

MCI Scottish Winter Meet

Inchree Centre Oinich

23rd February – 2nd March 2008

Join us for our free information evening and slide show in the Great Outdoors, Chatham St, Dublin 2 on Tuesday 11th December at 7pm. For further information and bookings contact tim@mountaineering.ie

Simon Moore Lecture

Simon Moore aka 'Irish Si' born in Northern Ireland starred in the cult climbing movie, 'Consumed' which was released in Britain in 2004, following him and some of his friends on their quest to tick the hardest of gritstone lines. Upon visiting his homeland, Si made the only repeat of John Dunne's 'Tolerance' (E8 6c - the second hardest route in Ireland).

11th March, Queens University Belfast

12th March, Dublin Park Inn, Smithfield Village

13th March, University College Cork

Entry: €7 MCI Members/Students/Unwaged or €10 non-members. For more information contact the MCI office at info@mountaineering.ie or (+353) 1 625 1115

MCI Youth Scottish Winter Skills 2008

16 March 2008

Venue Scotland, 16 - 21 March 2008

This programme aims to provide young people with an opportunity to learn the skills necessary to handle Scottish winter conditions under the supervision of experienced instructors and mountaineers. This includes navigation skills, avalanche awareness and emergency shelter building as well as winter walking and ice climbing, if conditions permit.

An ideal candidate for this course would be aged 16-21 and would have a good level of fitness, as well as some hillwalking or rock-climbing experience. They would be enthusiastic and eager to learn skills, with a view to using them independently in the future. If you think that this person sounds like you, then you should contact us to receive an application form!

Once we have received your form we may invite you to Tollymore Mountain Centre, Co Down, for a training and selection weekend on 4-6th January 2008 (Cost €65/€100).

This weekend is a valuable learning experience and provides an introduction to navigation and rope-work skills.

If you are successful, you may be chosen

to participate in the trip to Aviemore, in the Cairngorm Mountains, Scotland in March 2008.

If you are interested in applying for the Winter Skills Programme 2008, please contact: Angela Carlin, MCI Youth Development Officer
E: angela@mountaineering.ie
T: (+44) 2843 725354

MCI Spring Meet 2008

Venue Glendalough, County Wicklow

Friday 16 - Sunday 19 May 2008

More information on this new event will be online soon, keep the date free in your diary!

MCI Alpine Meet 2008

Venue Vicosoprano, Switzerland

Vicosoprano, Bregaglia, Switzerland

Saturday 5 - Saturday 19 July 2008

Courses for 2008

Families are particularly welcome to join us in Vicosoprano. Courses have been designed to suit all particular interests, if you are interested in walking or trekking you can also join us on a camping only option.

All courses will be five days, run over a six-day period with one rest day (rest day to be agreed at the time on the basis of weather conditions).

Alpine Adventure Walking (Tour of the Bregaglia Massif) - 5 day

Cost €500, ratio 1:6 or 2:8

6 - 11 & 13 - 18 July 2008*

Less technical than the Introduction to Alpine Mountaineering. We will make a hut-to-hut traverse over high passes and possibly glaciated terrain. The aim is to provide you with the skills to look after yourself with confidence on an alpine walking trip. This course is ideal for hill walkers with no previous high mountain experience.

Introduction to Alpine Mountaineering - 5 day

Cost €600, ratio 1:4

6 - 11 & 13 - 18 July 2008*

This five-day course allows time to practice the many alpine skills of glacier crossing, crevasse rescue, alpine roped movement and some easy rockclimbing. We would hope to bag a couple of peaks from a bivouac or alpine hut. All those booking on to this course must be competent hillwalkers, some mountaineering experience is desirable and a good level of fitness is essential.

Intermediate Alpine Mountaineering - 5 day

Cost €600, ratio 1:4

6 - 11 & 13 - 18 July 2008*

This course is designed for those who already have Alpine and /or Scottish winter experience and wish to improve their skills. All participants must have experience of using crampons and ice-axe and some knowledge of ropework, belays and simple rock climbing. An MCI Introduction to Alpine Mountaineering course would be a good precursor. As with all alpine courses a good fitness level is essential.

Advanced Alpine Mountaineering - 5 day

Cost €1,100, ratio 1:2

6 - 11 & 13 - 18 July 2008*

This five-day course is run at a ratio of 1:2 to allow participants undertake more technical routes. It is essential that participants have previous Alpine experience and sound knowledge of rope work and belays. Scottish winter mountaineering experience would also be an advantage. We would hope to progress onto multi-pitch climbs on snow and ice at grades of AD to TD.

** You must be at the campsite at 18:00 on the day prior to your course starting, either Saturday 5 July or Saturday 12 July 2008 for a pre course briefing and gear check.*

MCI Alpine Meet 2008 Information Evening

Are you considering attending the MCI Alpine Meet 2008? Well join us at the MCI Office in Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way, Park West Business Park on **Thursday 24th January 2008 at 7pm**. Come along and meet Mick Tighe our Chief Guide, the MCI Staff and see a presentation on what Vicosoprano has to offer. Great Outdoors staff will also be on hand to give you an insight on the gear you will need for the Meet. Refreshments available. Book your free place at alpinemee t@mountaineering.ie

Closing date for receipt of completed application forms and non refundable deposits is **31st March 2008**.

The Mountaineering Council of Ireland (MCI) is the National Governing Body for the sport of mountaineering in Ireland. The MCI covers the full spectrum of mountaineering activities including bouldering, hill walking, rambling, rock climbing, alpinism and indoor climbing. Contact: MCI, Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way, Park West Business Park, Dublin 12. Tel: (+353 1) 625 1115 Fax: (+353 1) 625 1116 Email: info@mountaineering.ie Web: www.mountaineering.ie